

It was partly that they were *pieces de circonstance*, thrown off in the storm of a revolution, partly that it was precisely the refinements of law and logic which Luther detested. Confronted with the complexities of foreign trade and financial organization, or with the subtleties of economic analysis, he is like a savage introduced to a dynamo or a steam-engine. He is too frightened and angry even to feel curiosity. Attempts to explain the mechanism merely enrage him; he can only repeat that there is a devil in it, and that good Christians will not meddle with the mystery of iniquity. But there is a method in his fury. It sprang, not from ignorance, for he was versed in scholastic philosophy, but from a conception which made the learning of the schools appear trivial or mischievous.

"Gold," wrote Columbus, as one enunciating a truism, "constitutes treasure, and he who possesses it has all he needs in this world, as also the means of rescuing souls from Purgatory, and restoring them to the enjoyment of Paradise."^{3a} It was this doctrine that all things have their price—future salvation as much as present felicity—which scandalized men who could not be suspected of disloyalty to the Church, and which gave their most powerful argument to the reformers. Their outlook on society had this in common with their outlook on religion, that the

essence of both
was the arraignment of a degenerate
civilization before
the majestic bar of an uncorrupted past. Of
that
revolutionary conservatism Luther, who
hated the
economic individualism of the age not less
than its
spiritual laxity, is the supreme example.
His attitude
to the conquest of society by the merchant
and financier
is the same as his attitude towards the
commercialization
of religion. When he looks at the Church in
Germany,
he sees it sucked dry by the tribute which
flows to the
new Babylon. When he looks at German
social life,
he finds it ridden by a conscienceless
money-power,
which incidentally ministers, like the
banking business